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**The Use of Comics to Learn a New Language**

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## Resumen

Hoy en día, uno de los desafíos que tienen las editoriales cuando elaboran material didáctico para la enseñanza de una segunda lengua o un idioma extranjero es la inclusión de contenido variado y metodologías que logren captar la atención de los estudiantes en sus diferentes niveles de aprendizaje. Para lograr este objetivo, deben incorporar imágenes, fotos, dibujos, canciones, comics, etc.

El presente estudio está centrado en el análisis de la influencia del uso de *comics* como una herramienta pedagógica para el aprendizaje de un nuevo idioma. Con este objetivo, se realizó la revisión bibliográfica de 21 estudios relacionados con el uso de *comics* en el aprendizaje de diferentes idiomas. Los participantes de estas investigaciones fueron estudiantes de idiomas de nivel principiante, intermedio y avanzado. Estos estudios fueron realizados por investigadores de varias universidades en 20 países alrededor del mundo.

Los resultados revelaron que la utilización de *comics* en la enseñanza de idiomas constituye una excelente herramienta pedagógica, ya que ayudan significativamente al desarrollo de las cuatro destrezas (lectura, escritura, habla y comprensión auditiva) de los estudiantes y les motivan en su aprendizaje.

**Palabras claves:** Cómic. Tiras cómicas. Aula. Nuevo lenguaje. Herramienta pedagógica.



## Abstract

Nowadays, one of the challenges publishers face when making didactic material for teaching a foreign/second language is the introduction of varied content and methodologies that may catch the students' attention at their different learning levels. For this purpose, images, photos, drawings, songs, comics, and other elements need to be incorporated.

This study focuses on an analysis of the influence of the use of *comics* as a pedagogical tool for learning a new language. For this purpose, a bibliographic research synthesis of 21 studies related to the use of *comics* in the learning of different languages was carried out. The participants of these investigations were language students at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. These studies were led by researchers from various universities in 20 countries around the world.

The results showed that the use of *comics* in language teaching has become an excellent pedagogical tool. Its use has shown that *comics* greatly help and motivate learners to improve their four language skills -reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

**Keywords:** Comics. Comic strips. Classroom. New language. Pedagogical tool.



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### **Dedication**

To my beloved parents Joselo and Cecilia and my brother Daniel who are the most important people in my life.

## Introduction

Nowadays, people all over the world are encouraged to learn a new language for different reasons, such as traveling, looking for better job opportunities, having fun, or studying. The new challenge language educators face when teaching a second/foreign language is to find better strategies to help students achieve their goals. How do teachers involve students in the nuts and bolts of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing? How do they motivate their students to learn a new language? What are the best pedagogical tools educators can use to teach a new language? There are many answers to these questions. One of them is the use of new teaching strategies. De Oliveira and Lan (2014) say that, at present, language teachers need to apply a variety of new strategies for both catching the students' attention and contributing to their learning, like for example using movies, comics, conceptual maps, conferences, and discussion forums.

This research is divided into six chapters that aim at evaluating the use of comics to learn a new language. The first chapter deals with a description of the research, which includes the background, statement of the problem, justification, and research questions. The theoretical framework is discussed in the second chapter. The third chapter deals with the literature review, which includes literary papers related to the use of comics to learn a new language. This has helped us have a clearer idea of how to achieve the goals of this project. Chapter four makes a brief description of the methodology used in this research project. Chapter five talks about the results obtained and includes an analysis of several research papers. Chapter six includes the conclusions we have arrived at and some recommendations we make for future research on foreign/second language teaching.

## CHAPTER I

### Description of the Research

#### 1.1 Background

Reading comics is not new among young people, teenagers, and adults. The first comic book, *New Funnies*, was printed in 1933 (Carter, 2007a, p.). However, the popularity of comics reached their top on the 1940s when millions of comics were sold. They had great variety of genres, such as action, horror, romance, comedy, etc. For that reason, they became attractive for people of all ages (Gorman, 2003).

Comics, also called *graphic novels* (Yildirim, 2013) have currently been adapted to movies, TV shows, and video games. They allow people who did not know about comics to get interested in learning more about the characters and the plot of a novel. This sudden interest led them to search for more information in direct sources; in other words, in the graphic novel that contains the original story.

A study carried out by Chou, Hsu, and Chen (2015) shows that comics can be effectively used in a classroom environment. Comics help students significantly increase their vocabulary. The aforementioned authors state that the pleasure of reading comics together with abundant contextualization and curricular practices have an important impact on learners.

In Ecuadorian public schools, English is taught on the basis of the national curriculum. In the past, English textbooks in Ecuador did not have enough visual aids, and the language used in the book did not reflect authentic language. Nowadays, new English textbooks have a variety of visual aids, including comic strips. The aim of this research is to evaluate whether or not the use of comic strips, which are now part of the textbooks used in



Ecuadorian schools, is an effective way to improve the students' level of English language proficiency.

In order to fulfill the objectives of the national curriculum, all new English textbooks in Ecuador include some comic strips that catch students' attention.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

In Ecuador, according to the national curriculum, public and private schools should teach English as a foreign language as part of their study programs. The majority of students in Ecuador have taken an average of five weekly English class sessions during twelve years. The Ecuadorian curriculum states that the students who finish high school should have at least a B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. However, the reality is that in most cases, especially in public schools, students are not even able to achieve an A2 level. For that reason, they cannot either keep a basic conversation in English or write short paragraphs without using translating tools.

The aim of this research is to investigate how comics can help improve students' new language skills. According to Duda and Tyne (2010), textbooks used in EFL classrooms have been proved misleading from what real communication involves. On the contrary, research by Chou, Hsu, & Chen (2015) found that teachers have used different pieces of literature like novels, short stories, and comic strips in the classroom, with the purpose of reaching a more realistic approach to real interaction and usage of the target language. They also say that using the abovementioned material is a good way to make students learn new vocabulary and get familiar with different expressions in the target

language. Csabay (2006) found that “in the last years, comic books caught the teachers' attention because of its versatility” (p.25). Furthermore, comics offer a lot of benefits, like for example involving students in the story, helping them analyze images, and making them remember the vocabulary learned from the comic books in an easy way (Wilujeng & Lan, 2015).

The use of comic strips as educational material not only reflects authentic language and culture but may also alleviate the youth's negative views towards reading, by offering them a positive experience of successful understanding experiences (McVicker, 2007). For that reason, it may be used as a helpful pedagogical tool to motivate students to learn a new language.

Comic books provide teenagers with a mixture of images and text that motivates them to learn a new language because of the visual aids that help them get the written information.

### **1.3 Justification**

According to Yilidrim (2013), several research studies on the use of comics as a pedagogical tool in the classroom have been carried out. These studies are oriented to prove the effectiveness of comics for improving the students' new language skills. Using graphic novels in the learning of a new language is an effective way of increasing certain skills, such as reading, writing, motivation, vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking, and so on. In spite of the fact that some people may think that comics are books for children, they use different text features like dialogues, narrative structures, and critical reading that allow students to increase their reading repertoire (Ranker, 2007).

G. Chen, Fan, C. Chang, Y. Chang and Y. Chen (2018) state that the versatility of comics -which includes picture stories, structures, and few words which make them more interesting- provides students who have difficulties reading and writing in a second/foreign language with a good learning experience. These studies have not only been focused on the learning of English but also on the learning of foreign languages in general. In this respect, they have proved the efficiency of comics as a useful pedagogical aid in the process of learning a new language.

Ranker (2007) found that some studies have been focused on the effects the media cause on the students' knowledge. In this sense, we can assume that people are highly influenced by the media. In the same way, Liu (2004) agrees that the major function of visual aids to comprehend factual information is the relationship between text content and details because both not only facilitate but also favor the memorization of vocabulary and grammar structures. In addition, they provide with more concrete information and text coherence.

This research is important for us because we future teachers want to know to which degree comic strips are helpful in language classrooms. In addition, more research on what skills students can develop through the use of comics as a tool for learning a new language and how teachers can use these tools in order to achieve significant learning has been carried out.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

1. To what extent do comics help students develop the four skills of a new language?
2. How can comics increase students' language learning motivation?
3. How can comics be used as a pedagogical tool for teachers in language classrooms?



## CHAPTER II

### Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

This research aims at finding out the positive or negative effects of using comics as a tool to learn a new language. For that reason, it is important to define the most important terms.

#### 2.2 Origin of comics

Graphics have been used by people since ancient times. Cavemen used some kind of drawings carved in stones, with the purpose of transmitting a message or communicating thoughts. Later, those drawings, called hieroglyphics, evolved into sophisticated graphics. These required many hours of work and the effort of professional artists to create them. For that reason, they were expensive. Those pieces of art were available for wealthy people only because poor people could not afford them. With the invention of the printing press, comics became a popular and easy way to enjoy reading (Sivak, 2003).

According to Yıldırım (2013), the word *comics* involves three main categories, which are comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels. Comic strips are a group of images that go along with text and tell a story embedded in horizontal blocks of three to five panels. Liu, J. (2004) defines a comic strip as a group of boxes with images and text that tells us a story. A comic book usually comes in a magazine way that has between twenty-four and forty pages and tells a story through the narration of several issues. A graphic novel is more like a book that contains a whole story inside.

McLoud (2000) stresses that comics are a revolutionary way of presenting information that combines images and text using a method that has never used before. Deligianni and





Pouroutidi (2016) confirm that comics are considered to be the favorite reading material of children. Comics use the unique combination of pictures and words.

### 2.3 Popularity of comics

The popularity of comics reached their highest level in the 1940s when millions of comics were sold due to their great variety of genres -action, horror, romance, comedy, etc. For that reason, they became attractive for people of all ages (Gorman, 2003).

The results of a study conducted by Carter (2007) shows that 75% percent of sixthgrade students in America love reading graphic novels. This is in a similar fashion to the way that comics were popular in the United States of America during the 1940s.

Due to the popularity of TV shows and movies based on comics, they have become very popular amongst young people, who consider them to be an important piece of literature. This is supported by the increase of sales of comic books (Bucher & Manning, 2004) and the popularity of movies like Batman, Spider-Man, V for Vendetta, and Sin City, as they are all based on graphic novels or comics (Behler, A. 2006).

Adaptations of famous graphic novels have also appeared on television in popular series like *Smallville*, *The Walking Dead*, and *The Human Target* (Yıldırım, 2013). In Korea, comics are very popular and are known as “manhwa;” in China, they are also popular and are known as “manhua”. In Japan, comics are referred to as “manga” and have become an important business, as manga has generated over 85 million dollars in revenue as of 2016. Manga emerged in Japan in the late 1900s as cheap entertainment, and it became popular because of its diverse genres that include horror, comedy, action, etc. Because of its

versatility, Japanese manga are preferred by buyers over more traditional types of literature in Japan (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003).

## **2.4 Comics as a tool in a foreign or second language classroom**

According to Schwartz and Rubinstein Ávila (2006), studies that have looked for the use of comics in teaching have shown that students are more interested and more motivated to learn with them. Teachers can leverage the popularity of comics because they will be easy to be found in every comic books store, but they have to be very careful when selecting a comic that is appropriate for kids or teenagers before incorporating it in the school curriculum (Bucher & Manning, 2004).

The results of a research carried out by specialists in the field show that graphic novels can be used as a powerful tool in the classroom, especially in language classrooms (Yıldırım, 2013).

Graphic novels are not always well received in educational environments. The problem is that some experts dismiss graphic novels as entertainment. For that reason, starting in the 1990s, universities and colleges started offering courses and programs based in “sequential art” (Sturm, 2002).

## **2.5 Comics as motivators for developing reading**

A study has shown that using comics to teach reading is superior to the use of traditional material (Roozafzai, 2012). Roozafzai considers that comics greatly motivate children to learn a second language, as comic books appear to increase the fun-factor in children. Yıldırım (2013) highlights that traditional methods of teaching a second/foreign

language using text-only reading material are not as effective as using graphic novels. Children learn better when graphic novels that are appropriate for their ages are used in class because they coincide with their interests. What is more, “comic books lead to other reading” (Krashen, 1993).

The use of comic books in the classroom can lead our students to improve their reading and writing skills. Hallenbeck (1976) notes that comics can help students who have problems with writing and reading.

## **2.6 Comics as motivators to develop writing**

Nixon (2012) thinks that more study is required on methods to introduce comics and graphic novels to students. More study is also needed to determine what exercises are most helpful. Frey and Fisher (2004) note that comics and graphic novels are not only good for teaching reading, but can be also used as the bases for teaching creative writing. Graphic novels are also very useful to help students develop their writing skill.

Findings by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) show that comic books have a positive effect on the teaching of English, especially for students who want to develop their writing skill, considering the fact that this is the most complex skill to learn for most learners.

## **2.7 How to use comics as a pedagogical tool in a foreign or second language learning class**

Comics usually involve some pictures and simple word structures that get together in order to tell us a story, while it can function as an interesting learning tool for students (Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang, and Chen, 2018). Brown (1977) emphasizes that comics have been relegated to the status of enjoyable activities during the classroom, and some teachers do not



consider them to be a valid teaching tool. For that reason, they use comics to motivate students and have fun classes. This is the reason that it is important to select appropriate comic books that can be actually used in the classroom and that can be included in the school curriculum. Luckily, there are teachers who consider comics are an important tool for students to start studying culture, literature, and communication theory.

The results of a research conducted by Liu, J. (2004) show that the use of comic strips to accompany a written text does not have a consistent effect across proficiency levels, considering the fact that even though some students improved their writing skill, an important number of participants were not able to improve their skills at all. There are many educators who still rely on traditional methods and would never consider using comics or graphic novels in the classroom. They view comics as an untested waste of their students' time (Gravett, 2005).

Although there are many skeptics who regard the use of graphic novels as a fad, graphic novels and comics have been proven to be effective teaching tools, as evidenced by abundant research and study (Yildirim, 2013).

The elements of graphic novels help students develop more sophisticated strategies that allow them to significantly improve their reading and writing skills and, more importantly, their language competence and intellectual development (Schwartz, 2002). A research by Liu, J. (2004) proved that students who used textbooks that include comic strips scored significantly higher than students who had textbooks without comics.



## CHAPTER III

### Literature Review

In this section, the influence of comics on each of the four language skills will be discussed. Different research studies will be described, summarized, and critically evaluated.

#### 3.1 Writing and comics

Learning writing can be sometimes a bit boring for students. For that reason, teachers need to try to apply new strategies to get their students actively involved in developing that skill when learning a new language. Consequently, the introduction of comics in the classroom as a tool is gaining force. It is sometimes linked to the use of technology. A clear example of it is shown by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016), who conducted a research in which the participants were 9 sixth graders aged 12. They were ESL learners of Greek background. This multi-method research study was carried out in Greece. The study was executed in four stages, which included observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

In the first stage, students made some pre-writing activities while the teacher explained the basic steps to create comics in a website called Pixton. In the second stage, students were asked to choose a topic. In the third stage, learners had to create a first draft of their story; their peers contributed with ideas to improve each other's piece of writing. In the last stage, the participants had to create the final story and self-evaluate it. The school presented the comics created by the students to their parents, which motivated the children to continue to write stories. Finally, as a post writing activity, students wrote a composition



about their experience working with collaborative writing and the results suggested that they were enthusiastic and their motivation for writing in English increased.

Another example of the spread of technology in a classroom setting is demonstrated by a study conducted by Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed, and Balaraman (2011). They analyzed the perceptions of a group of 30 TESL teacher trainees from a university of Malaysia about the use of digital comics as a tool to teach writing. For this research, the participants completed a questionnaire about the advantages and limitations of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in class. At the end of the study, they concluded that the use of ICT in today's education encourages students to write in English. However, it consumes a lot of time and resources because of technical factors, such as lack of Internet connection and computer labs.

Another innovative methodology to improve the writing skill is translation of comics, as concluded in a study carried out by Furuhashi-Turner (2013) that was carried out in the University of Ohio. The participants of the study were a group of students and teachers of the Japanese language. For the study, students were evaluated on the basis of a Japanese-English translation of a manga they chose from a list while the teachers provided feedback. After this activity, the participants filled a questionnaire that asked about their attitudes towards using translation as a means of improving their writing skill. The results showed that the students enjoyed translating a manga as a tool to improve their writing skill. It is worth noting that it helped not only students but also teachers. They both learned more about the differences in cultural issues and the importance of natural-sounding in writing when translating.

### 3.2 Vocabulary and comics

There are a vast number of comics which are oriented to kids as well as adults. Consequently, learning vocabulary through comics has no age restrictions. Graphic novels cover a great variety of themes, which catch the attention of people of all ages. A clear example of the use of comics to teach vocabulary to children can be seen in the study conducted by Wilujeng and Lan (2015), which was carried out in a multilingual school in Indonesia. The participants were fifth graders who were learning Mandarin Chinese. They were divided into three groups - experimental, control group 1, and control group 2. In order to carry out the study, the experimental group had to create comic strips without the help of online sources. Control group 1 was made up of individuals who were able to use online resources to create digital comic strips. Control group 2 comprised of students who had to work collaboratively to make up comic strips by using digital resources. The methodology consisted in a quasi-experimental research with qualitative and quantitative approaches which included a Mandarin vocabulary performance, a class-observation, questionnaires, and an interview. The results highlighted that the three study groups showed a positive improvement in vocabulary when using comics. In addition, it is important to state that control group 2 showed the highest improvement as compared to the other two groups. Additionally, the students' attitude towards using comics in learning Mandarin and the application of collaborative learning was considerably positive in all groups, but control group 2 was the most enthusiastic.

However, two other studies have demonstrated that adults can also take advantage of and improve their vocabulary skill through the use of comics. The first study was conducted by Kurniawan (2009) and focuses on the use of comics to improve the students' vocabulary



skill. The subjects of the study were 26 students of English of a university in Indonesia. The research data were collected through the application of two tests. The first one was administered after the first semester. The second test was administered after the second semester in order to find out if the students had improved their vocabulary. The results showed that the participants' average grade in the first test was 64.4 over 100. Their average grade in the second test increased to 71.7 over 100, which shows that they considerably improved their vocabulary skill. Observation was used to determine if the students' motivation towards using comics in a classroom setting to improve their English vocabulary ability increased. The second study was conducted by Basal, Aytan and Demir (2016) and shows similar results to the previous study because it demonstrated that adults improved their English language skill after using comics. This study concentrates on the importance of teaching vocabulary, specifically idioms, through the use of comic strips in a classroom setting. The participants of this study were 72 students of the English Language Department at a university in Turkey. They were divided into 2 groups -the experimental group learned idiomatic expressions via graphic novels and the control group learned the same idioms using traditional methods. In the experimental group, the idioms they learned were used in a script, which was later converted into a graphic novel. On the other hand, the control group learned the same idioms using sample sentences, looking for the meanings of words in a dictionary, and doing exercises. After all these activities were carried out, a questionnaire was administered to the participants. The results revealed that the experimental group outperformed their counterpart in learning English idioms. This shows the effectiveness of using comics as a tool to learn a new language.





Learning vocabulary is a primary part of learning a new language. However, it is also important that students learn idioms in order to speak the target language in a more natural way.

### **3.3 Comics and reading**

Textbooks that include contents for specific purposes have long been the most common type of teaching material used in classrooms. However, according to research carried out in this field, it may be seen that the use of comic strips has largely improved the students' reading skill as compared to the use of traditional teaching methods, and many studies on this issue have arrived at the same conclusion, like for example a study carried out by Roozafzai (2012), which focuses on the use of comics to improve EFL learners' reading skill. The participants of this study were Japanese university students who were divided into 2 groups. The experimental group worked with comic material while the control group worked with a traditional textbook and images during 20 sessions of regular English classes. A general reading comprehension test was administered to the participants in order to find out which group performed better. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. This tells us that comic strips are more beneficial than traditional methods to improve the students' reading ability in the classroom. Another example is a study carried out by Merc and Kampusu (2013). They conducted this study with

167 university students from Turkey. They were divided into two groups according to their language proficiency level (one low-intermediate level and one high-intermediate level). Each group was subdivided into two smaller groups -experimental and control group. The experimental groups worked with comic books depending on their language level and the



other groups worked with traditional textbooks. The goal was to help students improve their reading skill. The study revealed that the learners who used comic books in the classroom regardless of their language proficiency level- considerably improved their reading ability as compared to the groups who used traditional methods and textbooks.

Another good example that coincides with the two latter studies was conducted by Liu (2004). This study was carried out at a university in the United States. The participants took a proficiency test before enrolling to the study. They were divided randomly (regardless of their English level) into four groups made up of 13 or 14 students each. The groups were provided with different types of material. The first group read comics for highlevel students. The second one used a textbook with simple images only. The third group worked with comics and beginner-level texts. The fourth group worked with a traditional beginner-level book with images and text only. Upon completion, the students took a posttest which showed these results:

- Beginner-level students who used comics with advanced-level texts outperformed their counterparts who worked with advanced-level-textbook based only.

- The advanced-level students who used advanced-level textbooks with comic strips did not enhance their reading comprehension skill.

- Despite of the level of the book, students with an advanced-level of English proficiency performed better with traditional methods than those who used comics.

- Nonetheless, basic English proficiency students performed better when they used comic strips regardless of their language level.



### **3.4 Listening and speaking enhancement with comics**

Even though some people may think that the use of comic books in a classroom environment may be good to improve the reading or writing skills only, that might not be true, as it can be seen in the study led by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016), in which sixth grade students of Greece learning English as a foreign language participated. Despite of the fact that the main goal of that research was to improve the students' writing skill, it was demonstrated that, when working in groups, the students could develop their speaking and listening skills in the process of creating comic strips collaboratively because they were able to contribute with ideas to the elaboration of the script of the comic while getting feedback from their peers. Something similar occurred in a research conducted by Kurniawan (2009), which consisted of a classroom research project focused on improving the learners' vocabulary ability through the use of comics. The participants were 20 freshman students of a university in Indonesia. The findings showed that the students improved their ability to speak in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Kurniawan strongly believes that the use of comic strips should be included in the classroom curriculum.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Methodology**

To answer the proposed research questions, the methodology used was exploratory bibliographic research. For that reason, some research studies were analyzed. These studies needed to be peer-reviewed and published in academic journals. Bordage and Caelleigh (2001) stated that peer review has increased its popularity during the last fifty years because

it has proven to be a more effective way to test the reliability of scientific articles. Consequently, it makes scientific articles more attractive for editors.

The articles we selected needed to be related to the use of comics in the learning of a new language in a classroom environment and their effects on teachers and students. The articles were selected from a list of academic research studies. It did not matter if the approach of the articles was quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both. The most relevant studies for the research were those which were written in the English language, regardless of the country in which they were applied. The articles were grouped according to their field of study and depending on which aspects of language -reading, writing, motivation, etc.- they were oriented to.

A total of 21 articles were selected and further analyzed in order to compare the results and see in which degree comics can be useful for learning a new language. Also, an evaluation which made us realize whether or not comics could increase the students' language learning motivation was made. Similarly, it was evaluated if the use of graphic novels could be a pedagogical tool for teachers in foreign/second language classrooms.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Results**

#### **5.1 Analysis of results**

In this chapter, the 21 studies selected for this research were analyzed in order to answer the research questions. The studies have been organized in eight Tables and distributed into the following categories: language skills and sub skills improvement,

location, target language, age range, comics as a motivator for learning a new language, and comics as a pedagogical tool.

The Table and the information presented below will answer the first research question:

To what extent do comics help students develop the four skills of a new language?

**Table 1**

*Language Skills and Sub Skills Improvement*

Author/Year	Skills Improvement	N	%
Merc & Kampusu (2013); Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Cimermanová (2015); Jones (2010); Liu (2004); Roozafzai (2012); Furuata-Turner (2013) Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Baker (2011)	Reading	9	42.9
Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Furuata-Turner (2013)	Writing	4	19
Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Kurniawan (2009); Wilujeng & Lan (2015)	Speaking	3	14.3
Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016)	Listening	1	4.8
Wilujeng & Lan (2015); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016) Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Kurniawan (2009)	Vocabulary	4	19
<b>Total</b>		21	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the studies focused on the skills developed after using comic books or comic strips in a classroom environment. Nine studies focused on the enhancement of the reading skill rather than the vocabulary and writing skills, which are the second skills and sub skills where students showed improvement.

## **Reading**

A study conducted by Merc and Kampusu (2013) showed that students are better at comprehending reading texts that are accompanied by visuals, which is consistent with the results of the studies by Jones (2010), who found out that the use of comic books had an overall positive effect on second language learners. A study by Roozafzai (2012) showed similar results because students that were learning English as a foreign language with the use of comics performed better than their counterparts that were taught reading by using traditional textbooks, although he points out that there have been an interesting number of research studies which have tried to find appropriate material for teaching the reading skill in EFL classrooms. On the other hand, an investigation carried out by Liu (2014) found out that students with a low level of English proficiency that studied using a high-level textbook that had comic strips scored significantly higher than students who possessed a high level of English proficiency but were taught using a high-level textbook without comics. The main difference was that the former students were able to recall vocabulary better because of the influence of comic strips.

## **Writing and vocabulary**

Students' performance in writing and vocabulary was similar, as shown in the Table above. Basal, Aytan and Demir (2016) found out that participants who had learned idioms through graphic novels outperformed in the post-test their peers who did not learn idioms with graphic novels. This tells us how useful graphic novels are for vocabulary teaching. The same results were found by Wilujeng and Lan (2015), who noticed that the participants' attitude about learning was strongly positive after creating comic strips. It also helped them improve their vocabulary learning. Also, a study conducted by Chou, Hsu, and Chen (2015)

shows similar results and it is highlighted that students improved their vocabulary after creating short sentences for their comic strips. Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed, and Balaraman (2011) agree that the participants have positive attitudes towards using digital comics when learning the writing skill.

An investigation conducted by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) yielded positive results towards the combination of writing and technology for the creation of short comic strips. The participants improved their writing skills significantly, which tells us that it is a good way of catching the students' attention as compared to the use of traditional methods.

Comic strips are positive not only for vocabulary and writing improvement but also as a motivational tool for students.

### **Speaking and listening**

There are not enough research studies that focus on the speaking and listening skills. In a study led by Wilujeng and Lan (2015), the group who worked collaboratively outperformed the other students who worked individually. This shows that the first group improved considerably their speaking and listening skills because they interacted with their peers to create their own comic strips. These results matched what was demonstrated by Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016) in their research, in which the students worked collaboratively and considerably improved their speaking and listening skills while creating together the comic strips.

**Table 2***Location*

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Place of the study</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Özdemir (2017); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Wilujeng & Lan (2015); Merc & Kampusu (2013); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); York & Stiller (2013); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Jones (2010); Roozafzai (2012); Kurniawan (2009); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002)	Asia	11	52.4
Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Baker (2011); Liu (2004) ; Furuhashi-Turner (2013)	America	6	28.6
Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Cimermanová (2015)	Europe	2	9.5
Armour & Iida (2016); Armour (2011)	Oceania	2	9.5
<b>Total</b>		21	100

Table 2 shows that the studies were conducted in four continents: America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. A brief description of these studies may be seen below.

**Asia**

Half of the studies took place in Asia, as can be seen in Table 2. The studies conducted by Özdemir (2017), Merc and Kampusu (2013), Basal, Aytan, and Demir (2016) were carried out in Turkey. Japan was the place chosen by York and Stiller (2013) and

Jones (2010) to develop their studies. Two studies conducted by Chou, Hsu, and Chen (2015) and Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang, and Chen (2018) were carried out in Taiwan. A research done by Wilujeng and Lan (2015) was carried out in Indonesia, and a study conducted by Roozafzai (2012) was carried out in Iran.



52.4 % of the studies were carried out in countries like Turkey or Taiwan, which shows the interest Asian students have to learn English using comic books. This reflects a cultural influence because Asian people very much like comics. **America**

It is interesting to mention that six out of the 21 studies were carried out in America. The studies conducted by Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed, and Balaraman (2011), Ujiie and Krashen (1996), Baker (2011), Furuhashi-Turner (2013), and Liu (2004) were carried out in the United States, whereas the study directed by Silva, Santos, and Bispo (2017) was carried out in Brazil. Four of the five studies that were carried out in the United States were oriented to immigrants who were learning English as a second language, whereas the study conducted by Furuhashi-Turner (2013) focused on the learning of the Japanese language as a foreign language. It is necessary to highlight that the majority of studies were conducted in the United States, not in Latin America.

### **Europe**

Only 9.5% of the research studies were carried out in Europe. The study carried out by Cimrmanová (2015) was done in Slovakia and studied the effects of using authentic comics with EFL learners. The results show positive effects in the students' vocabulary learning and motivation when reading. The research by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) was carried out in Greece with elementary-school students who were learning English as a second language in a private school. It was observed that creating stories by means of digital comics helped students develop their writing skill.

## Oceania

Finally, two studies were carried out in Oceania, specifically in Australia. The study carried out by Armour (2011) focused on the use of manga (Japanese comics) in a Japanese language classroom in Australia. Five years later Armour and Iida (2016) explored the relationship between Japanese culture fans and their interest in learning Japanese as a second language in Australia.

In conclusion, there is not enough research on the use of comics in Europe and Oceania.

**Table 3**

*The English Language and Other Languages*

Author/Year	Language	N	%
Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Merc & Kampusu (2013); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); Baker (2011); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); York & Stiller (2013); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Cimermanová (2015); Jones (2010); Roozafzai (2012); Liu (2004); Kurniawan (2009) Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Özdemir (2017)	English	16	76.2
Wilujeng & Lan (2015)	Mandarin	1	4.8
	Chinese		
Armour & Iida (2016); Armour (2011); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002); Furuhashi-Turner (2013)	Japanese	4	19
<b>Total</b>		21	100

The Table above shows that most studies focus on the learning of the English language as compared to other languages. 23.8% of the studies were developed in Asian languages, such as Japanese and Mandarin Chinese.

It is important to mention that a total of 21 studies were analyzed in this category and two of them only described students' motivation as they were native speakers.

### **English**

16 out of 21 studies focused on the learning of English as a second or foreign language. The study conducted by Kurniawan (2009), in which the participants were freshman students of the English major in a university in Indonesia, shows that using comics to teach vocabulary greatly helped students improve their vocabulary ability. Silva, Santos, and Bispo (2017) found out that using comics to teach English as a foreign language in Brazil helped their students to reduce the gap between theory and practice.

A study directed by Merc and Kampusu (2013) consisted of 167 Turkish EFL learners, who were divided into two proficiency levels (lower-intermediate and upperintermediate) and the results showed that all students instructed with comic strips performed better than those who received instruction without comic strips. Similarly, a study conducted by Liu (2004) shows that the students who worked with a textbook with comic strips scored higher than their counterparts who worked with a traditional textbook.

In Iran, a research conducted by Roozafzai (2012) showed that a group of students learning EFL performed better when they used textbooks with comics and images to improve their reading skill than another group of students who were taught with a textbook that had traditional images and contents. Similar results were found by Chou, Hsu, and Chen (2015) in a research in which participants were Taiwanese junior high students learning EFL. They

considerably improved their vocabulary and reading skills after being taught with a textbook that had comics. A study by Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed, and Balaraman (2011) included 30 TESL teacher trainees in a university in Malaysia that had a positive perception of using ICT and digital comics in their classes when teaching ESL writing. A great part of the research studies dealt with English as a second/foreign language, which confirms English as a *lingua franca* (Mansfield & Poppianca, 2012).

### **Mandarin Chinese and Japanese**

Five out of 21 studies focused on learning languages other than English through the use of comics. A study conducted by Wilujeng and Lan (2015) analyzed how beneficial learning Mandarin through the use of comics for Indonesian fifth grade students was. The results showed that these students considerably improved their vocabulary, whereas the studies conducted by Armour (2011) and Armour and Iida (2016) observed the relationship between Japanese as a foreign language in Australia and the students' love for the Japanese culture, including music and manga (Japanese comics). Furuhashi-Turner (2013) did the same thing but in the United States. These studies made the researchers conclude that students were strongly motivated to learn Japanese and it was easier for them to learn the language as they were fans of Japanese comics, which helped them learn and remember new vocabulary easily. Finally, a study directed by Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori, and Hayashi (2002) researched how foreign students in Japan improved their learning of Japanese through the use of two multimedia comic books.

In short, Chinese Mandarin and Japanese showed positive effects because of the use of comics, but it is important to point out that not many research studies have been carried out in these two languages as compared to English.

**Table 4***Age Range*

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Wilujeng & Lan (2015); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); Cimermanová (2015)	Children	4	19
Özdemir (2017); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Ujiie & Krashen (1996)	Teenagers	3	14.3
Merc & Kampusu (2013); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); York & Stiller (2013); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Jones (2010); Roozafzai (2012); Liu (2004); Armour & Iida (2016); Kurniawan (2009); Armour (2011); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002); Furuhata-Turner (2013); Baker (2011)	Adults	14	66.7
<b>Total</b>		21	100

As it can be seen in Table above, the participants of a great part of the studies selected were adults. That occurred because the majority of studies were carried out with university students.

**Children**

Four studies were conducted in elementary schools. Fourth graders participated in a study by Cimermanová (2015), which aimed at finding out to what extend students apply reading techniques, vocabulary, and context they are familiar with when reading new material. They also tried to see to what extent creating their own comic strips favored the students' learning. A study carried out by Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang, and Chen (2018) involved the participation of fifth graders and the purpose was to promote the autonomous



learning of the English language through digital comic performance-based learning. The participants of an investigation conducted by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) were sixth graders of primary education who were studying English in a private school. Digital comics were created with the purpose of motivating students to improve their writing skill.

Nineteen percent of these research studies focused on children, and it is interesting to see that most of them used digital resources when creating their comic strips.

### **Teenagers**

Teenagers participated in 14.3% of the research studies that have been analyzed. The participants of a study led by Ujiie and Krashen (1996) were seventh graders aged 12 and 13 years old. The findings of this research showed that the students who enjoyed reading comic books tend to read more in general. A research conducted by Özdemir (2017) was carried out in Turkey. The participants were seventh graders. The teacher provided the students with comic books to read in class. After reading some part of the book, they had to answer some open-ended questions, which helped them improve their reading and writing skills.

### **Adults**

Adults' participation represents a 66.7% of the studies selected and has become the highest percentage in relation to the rest of participants.

A study conducted by York and Stiller (2013) consisted of 180 participants, mostly Japanese male university students, who were around nineteen years old, which is similar to the research carried out by Jones (2010), in which the participants were Japanese female university students.

The participants in a study carried out by Liu (2014) were adults. They were divided into groups after taking a test, which determined their language proficiency levels. Two

groups were taught with comic strips and the other two groups were taught with a traditional textbook. The purpose was to find out which group performed better when dealing with reading comprehension. The participants of a study conducted by Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori, and Hayashi (2002) were foreign students learning Japanese in a Tokyo institute. They were divided into groups on the basis of their level of proficiency in the Japanese language skills. The purpose was to find out which group performed better when learning Japanese using multimedia comic books.

The average age of the participants in a study conducted by Roozafzai (2012) was 20 to 25 years old. They were Iranian girls learning English as a foreign language, and they were taught with comic strips. The idea was to find out if this material worked better than traditional materials in a classroom environment to improve the students' reading skill.

It can be seen that adults represent the highest percentage of the participants in the studies, which tells us that teaching this group of people using comics also produces positive results.

Tables 5 and 6 below will answer the second research question: How can comics be used as a pedagogical tool for teachers in language classrooms?

**Table 5**

*Comics as Motivators for Learning a New Language*

Author/Year	Motivation	N	%
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Kurniawan (2009); Wilujeng & Lan (2015); York & Stiller (2013); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Furuhashi-Turner (2013) Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Liu (2004); Özdemir (2017); Merc & Kampusu (2013); Roozafzai (2012); Baker (2011); Cimermanová (2015); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Armour (2011)	Positive	18	85.6
Armour & Iida (2016)	Neutral	1	4.8
Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002)	Not Specified	1	4.8
Jones (2010)	Negative	1	4.8
<b>Total</b>		21	100

Eighteen out of twenty-one studies showed that the participants found the use of comics as a positive motivator. Only one study reported that using comics to learn a new language has no positive or negative but neutral influence on students' motivation, as can be seen in Table 5.

One research study was categorized as not specified, because, even though it described a positive influence when using comics to learn a new language, students' motivation was not reported.

### **Positive motivation**

In a study conducted by Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang, and Chen (2018), the participants had the freedom to create their own comic strips using digital tools, which motivated them to write freely and learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures. After using English comic books to learn English, the Japanese students of a study directed by Jones (2010) felt



motivated to read in English because comic books helped them guess the meanings of some words by looking at pictures, which meant they felt confident to keep on reading. According to a study conducted by Cimermanová (2015), the use of comics in the classroom increased student's motivation to read and overcome linguistic barriers when reading authentic material.

Even though writing is considered a complex and difficult process that increases demotivation in students learning a new language, a study by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) proved the positive effects of using comics as a tool to motivate students to develop the writing skill. Similar results were obtained in a study conducted by Chou, Hsu and Chen (2015), in which the participants were taught with comic books to increase the students' creativity and improve their writing skill.

A study by Ujiie and Krashen (1996) found out that the participants who enjoyed reading comic books reported more pleasure in reading in general and tended to read more books. Kurniawan (2009) stated that "using comics as a teaching strategy could improve the students' motivation in improving their ability to speak in English," which shows the positive impact comics have on students who are learning of a foreign language.

**Neutral** On the other hand, Armour and Iida (2016) stated that even though the participants of their study liked to read Japanese comics, it did not necessarily motivate them to study Japanese formally.

### **Negative**

Jones (2010) pointed out that the participants in his research had a negative attitude towards using comics as reading material in the classroom. In fact, their motivation to read English material had slightly decreased.

In conclusion, the use of comics not only has a positive effect on the predisposition students have to improve their different skills but it is also a useful tool to motivate them.

**Table 6**

*Types of Skills Developed through Motivation*

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>skill</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Liu (2004); Özdemir (2017); Merc & Kampusu (2013); Roozafzai (2012); Baker (2011); Cimermanová (2015); Jones (2010); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Armour (2011)	Reading	10	47.7
York & Stiller (2013); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Furuhashi-Turner (2013) Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011)	Reading and Writing	7	33.3
Kurniawan (2009); Wilujeng & Lan (2015)	Speaking	2	9.5
Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002); Armour & Iida (2016)	Not Specified	2	9.5
<b>Total</b>		21	100

Table 6 shows that most studies are oriented to improve the reading and writing skills as compared to the percentage of 9.5% which shows that comics motivate students to improve the speaking skill. Two studies out of 21 did not specify if the use of comics motivated students to improve their target language skills. The participants of a study conducted by York and Stiller (2013) were strongly motivated to create their own comic strips using online resources. They were interested in reading and correcting their classmates' written work. Finally, they showed a desire to participate in such activities in the future. The findings of a study by Chen et al (2018) showed that letting students edit scripts and design situations made

them happy and feel motivated to keep writing and improving their grammar and vocabulary skills in the target language.

Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) found out that creating comics in a classroom environment motivated the participants of their research to write. The majority of students listened carefully to the teacher's instructions and seemed to enjoy creating their own scripts for their comic strips. The students were excited to create their own comic strips even before they started. They were inspired and motivated throughout the whole process. Their motivation came from the fact that they felt like their work had a purpose. They printed out their final version and showed it to their parents and peers. Something interesting was found by Özdemir (2017) in a study where the participants read some comic strips in complete silence while showing to be interested in such material. They even took home the comic books, leaving behind textbooks and other stuff. That was probably because they wanted to keep reading at home to improve their reading ability. The results of a study by Kurniawan (2009) pointed out that the use of comic strips in the classroom to learn a new language improved the students' motivation and increased their ability to speak English, which can be noticed in the students' outperformance in their vocabulary score.

Reading was the skill students were mostly motivated in; writing followed it. There is no report about the listening skill related to students' motivation when using comics.

Tables 7 and 8 below will answer the third research question: How can comics be used as a pedagogical tool for teachers in language classrooms?

**Table 7***The Efficacy of Comics as a Pedagogical Tool*

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Pedagogical Tool</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Liu (2004); Kurniawan (2009); Armour (2011); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002); Merc & Kampusu (2013); Roozafzai (2012); Jones (2010); Cimermanová (2015); Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015)	Useful	12	57.1
Özdemir (2017)	Neutral	1	4.8
Furuhata-Turner (2013); Wilujeng & Lan (2015); York & Stiller (2013); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Ujiie & Krashen (1996); Baker (2011); Armour & Iida (2016)	Not Specified	8	38.1
<b>Total</b>		21	100

Table 7 shows that 12 out of 21 studies deal with how positive it is to use comic books as a pedagogical tool. One study is neutral because, even though comic strips may be used as a pedagogical tool, it is difficult to find and choose the correct material to use in the classroom. Eight research studies did not specify if comics were useful or useless as a pedagogical tool in a language classroom. No studies were found which opposed to the use of comics as a pedagogical tool.

According to Liu (2004), using visuals to provide context helped engage students in reading. However, comics ought to be chosen carefully because they should reflect the text's linguistic complexity. A study by Özdemir (2017) agreed that comic strips in magazines and

the Internet can be used as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, even though it is difficult to find appropriate material for instructional purposes.

Armour (2011) agreed that using ‘manga’ (Japanese comics) to teach Japanese provided his students with the opportunity to use authentic material for learning a new language. A study by Chen et al. (2018) showed that the group of students of the experimental group who used digital comics as a tool in the classroom performed better than the control group who learned Chinese using traditional teaching methods. The same results were found by Roozafzai (2012), whose study reported that the participants who used comic texts and images performed better on learning reading than those who used traditional textbooks and pictures.

The results of a study conducted by Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori, and Hayashi (2002) showed that the language learning material based on comic stories and strips could be an effective tool for language learning. Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed, and Balaraman (2011) agreed that using ICT and digital comics in a classroom environment encouraged students to write in English. An investigation carried out by Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) showed positive results when creating digital comics using technology. An increase in students’ interest in learning a new language could be observed.

Finally, according to Özdemir (2017), even though comic strips are one of the most accessible materials to be used as an instructional tool, it is hard to find the correct comic books to use in a classroom environment because most of them are inappropriate for instructional purposes.

In conclusion, all the above mentioned authors agree that comic books are a useful pedagogical tool and they highlight the importance they have as authentic material.

Moreover, they reported the importance of the combination of comics and technology in the classroom, especially when students have to create their own comic strips.

**Table 8**

*Comics as a Pedagogical Tool*

Author/Year	Tool	N	%
Furuhata-Turner (2013)	Translation	1	4.8
York & Stiller (2013); Deligianni & Pouroutidi (2016); Wilujeng & Lan (2015); Chen, Fan, Chang, Chang & Chen (2018); Yunus, Salehi, Tarmizi, Syed & Balaraman (2011)	Creation of comic strips	5	23.8
Liu (2004); Özdemir (2017); Kurniawan (2009); Basal, Aytan & Demir (2016); Silva, Santos & Bispo (2017); Lai, Bjornerud, Akahori & Hayashi (2002) Merc & Kampusu (2013); Roozafzai (2012); Jones (2010); Baker (2011); Cimermanová (2015); Chou, Hsu & Chen (2015); Armour (2011)	Visual support	13	61.9
Armour & Iida (2016); Ujiie & Krashen (1996)	Not specified	2	9.5
Total		21	100

Thirteen out of twenty-one studies used comics as visual support in a second or foreign language classroom. Five research studies focused on the creation of comic strips, whereas one study used comics in the classroom as a translation tool. Finally, two studies did not specify how comics were used as a pedagogical tool the classroom.

### **Translation**

A study conducted by Furuhata-Turner (2013) focused on the translation of Japanese manga into English, considering its popularity among American students. This research

showed how positive it is to use comics as a pedagogical tool in a foreign language classroom.

### **Creation of comic strips**

Five out of twenty-one research studies focused on the creation of comic strips. A study led by York and Stiller (2013) was carried out in two Japanese universities. The researchers motivated their students to create comic strips using a website specifically designed for this purpose. Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) arrived at positive conclusions in their research as their students enjoyed the experience of creating comic strips as a tool to learn writing because they were excited when they used a computer to create their stories. They found it more pleasurable than using traditional methods and they very much enjoyed the whole experience. The use of comics in peer work as a teaching strategy could improve vocabulary ability significantly (Kurniawan, 2009.) These researchers' findings pointed out that using comics through peer work as a teaching strategy is necessary to improve the students' ability to speak English in terms of vocabulary and grammar. They also highlighted that the students' performance increased on the basis of the context they worked in.

### **Visual aids**

Fifty-seven percent of the research studies used comics as visual aids to improve the students' skills. As it has been previously mentioned, most researchers consider that the use of comics as visual aids is helpful not only for students but also for teachers. For that reason, it is important to share what Deligianni and Pouroutidi (2016) mentioned on their



research study: The use of comics as a visual aid could help teachers and students become creative and improve their language skills through the process of writing, designing, and publishing original comic books.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **6.1 Conclusions**

According to the information collected in this research synthesis, the use of comics in a classroom setting has a positive effect on the students learning of a new language. Even though the studies considered in this research were carried out in different countries in four continents - America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania -, most of them were related to the teaching of the English language, considering the fact that English has become a must-learn language nowadays (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, and Chinnawongs, 2002). Additionally, at present, teachers are using new tools, such as comics, to engage students in the learning of their target language. One significant finding in this study is that 92% of the researchers agree that comics can be used as a pedagogical tool in a classroom setting. In the same line of thought, Basal, Aytan and Demir (2016) showed that graphic novels can be also used as an effective tool to differentiate vocabulary instruction from other areas in language teaching because they combine two elements -images and words-, which allow students to understand more easily what they are reading. Furthermore, Furuhashi-Turner (2013) agrees with what the above mentioned authors affirm. He also agrees that the use of comics is an effective tool for learning new languages as an efficient visual aid for learners.



Regardless the age of the participants, the country in which the studies was carried out, or the target language they were learning, they improved their language skills when using comics. Besides, Özdemir (2017) revealed that it is important to choose the correct comics. It is necessary to incorporate content which is appropriate to the students' age and language level in order to keep them interested in the process.

A clear example of this is mentioned by Liu (2004), who agrees that textbooks for ESL and EFL learners should be carefully designed. In addition, 90% of researchers found out that the use of comics motivates students to learn a new language. Similarly, Wilujeng and Lan (2015) revealed that students had a positive attitude when they worked in the creation of comic strips. During class time, they did not show any sign of distraction as they were highly interested in the task.

It is important to say that none of the studies were found to be against the use of comics as a pedagogical tool or motivator for students.

In conclusion, comics are not only useful when teaching a new language, but they are also considered a positive and motivational pedagogical tool when teaching or learning a new language.

## **6.2 Recommendations, limitations and future areas to be studied**

This exploratory study has analyzed in depth the use of comics to learn a new language. Although a vast number of researches have been reviewed, it is necessary to highlight that none of them was carried out in Ecuador. Therefore, conducting empirical studies in our context would make us have a better insight of the influence comics have when students learn a new language. It is worth mentioning that another limitation we have



found when reviewing the above mentioned studies is that a percentage of 95% is related to the language skills of reading and writing. Consequently, it is difficult to affirm that the use of comic strips is effective to teach the other two main skills -speaking and listening.

Apart from that, 74% of the researched studies were focused on the use of comics to learn English and only a small number of studies were related to teaching other languages, this being a limitation since the results obtained were mostly a product of an English context.

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